

## **Steps to a Healthier US Workforce Symposium**

October 26-28, 2004

Cafritz Conference Center

George Washington University

Washington D.C.

**October 27**

**Session A-5: Small Business**

**Room 308, Parks Room**

**Session Organizers:** Paul Schulte, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; Shawn Combs, National Federation of Independent Business

The purpose of this session is to examine the issues that small businesses face with regard to the integration of workplace health promotion and occupational safety and health programs.

**Objective:** At the conclusion of this session participants will be able to:

1. Understand the problems and issues of small business owners and managers.
2. Learn examples of how small businesses address health promotion and occupational safety and health.
3. Identify strategies to address the needs of small business.

**Moderator:**

Paul Schulte, Ph.D., National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Cincinnati, Ohio

→ **Key items from the presentations** are noted after each speaker listed below

**Speakers:**

**Shawn Combs**, Assistant State Director, National Federation of Independent Business, Columbus, Ohio

Health & Safety Challenges for Small Employers

**NOTES:**

This speaker addressing only objective one above, understanding small business.

The NFIB is made up of small independent family owned businesses.

NFIB has 600,000 members nationally

Members are from most every sector including farming, service, construction, and manufacturing.

Members with less than 10 employees make up 70% of our membership and less than 1% of our membership is over 100 employees.

Our main serve is to act as a lobbying arm for our members.

As a lobbying group we are known for being very persuasive.

We conduct lots of surveying of our members and we know what our members want.

Small business creates 2/3 of all new jobs.

Small business employees 1/2 of the U.S. workforce.

What is the mind set of small business owners?:

- they are risk takers
- they are putting their \$ on the line to start up a company
- they want to make the decisions for their own company
- they often work 14-16 hours a day and 60-80 hours a week
- they understand that it takes 3 to 5 years to get a return on initial investment
- they are busy with their company keeping their customers happy
- they hire lots of family members and close friends and have an interest in the welfare of their employees
- their top issues are: #1 cost of health care; #2 cost of liability insurance, and #3 workers compensation cost
- NFIB has partnered on safety issues with National Wide Insurance
- ¾ of business owner are running their own safety programs
- for the most part they have an attitude of “accidents will happen”
- they will not have a written safety program if they have less than 11 employees
- if they do have a written safety program there are insurance credits available
- on average there was a 22% increase in health care insurance premiums last year
- at that rate health care will double every 7 years (it will double faster at that rate!)
- the U.S. paid \$1.7 trillion on health care last year
- there is a disconnect between service rendered and payment of health care bills and that is a problem
- poor life style choices are not linked to payment of health care bills and that is also a problem

After the presentation I spoke with Shawn and asked how much the safety programs, that he made available to his members, were used. Shawn did not think they were used much. That begs the question “How do you reach small business?” If we use the associations to communicate and distribute wellness and safety and health issues, will they be used? We will have to study that.

**Garry Lindsay, M.P.H., CHES, Director of Business Partnership for Prevention, Washington, D.C.**

Small Business, Big Potential: Health Promotion Strategies for Small Employers

NOTES:

I can get slides by sending an email to Garry. I got those slides.

[glindsay@prevent.org](mailto:glindsay@prevent.org)

Worksite Focus...

- Steps to a HealthierUS
- HealthierUS
- Healthy Workforce 2010
- Healthy People 2010

750 members in Business Partnership for Prevention (BPP)

Tools are available from BPP to help businesses implement prevention programs.

[www.prevent.org](http://www.prevent.org) book is available

BPP has two objectives:

- increase employee participation
- increase the number of businesses that offer a comprehensive prevention program

Objectives:

1. Change lifestyle behaviors
  - a. Reduce tobacco use.
  - b. Reduce cost of lost productivity from alcohol and drug use.
  - c. Increase physical activity for adults.
  - d. Increase proportion of adults who are a health weight.
2. Enhance physical environment
  - a. Reduce work related injuries and lost work time.
  - b. Reduce work related deaths.
3. Change landscape for better health
  - a. Increase proportion of workers with health insurance.
  - b. Increase proportion of insured to include preventive health services.

Many small employees do not have good access to good health services

A higher proportion of small businesses, compared to large business, do not provide health insurance for their workers.

The book (Health Workforce 2010) has a planning guide and questionnaire for employees of small business.

Supportive environment

Self help behavior change

Contacts for community help

On line connections for help:

Health Promotion Ideas that Work booklet is available at BPP web site.

National Wellness Institute, [www.nationalwellness.org](http://www.nationalwellness.org)

[www.welcoa.org](http://www.welcoa.org)

AARPs get fit on route 66, <http://hesonline.com/>

Building and Trades union, [www.sbctc.org/build/](http://www.sbctc.org/build/)

[www.healthyohioans.org](http://www.healthyohioans.org) wellness programs, small steps

[www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org) heart at work online

American Cancer Society, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

American Lung Association, <http://www.lungusa.org/>

[www.healthierUS.gov](http://www.healthierUS.gov)

[www.ahrq.gov/ppip/50plus/](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/50plus/)

**John Gooding**, President, Gooding, Simpson, Mackes, Inc. Ephrata, PA

Issues in Roofing

NOTES:

He owns 3 companies, 2 roofing and 1 sheet metal.

He is past president of the trade association National Roofing Contractor's Association (NRCA) that has been around for 118 year and has 5000 members.

Average contractor size is 10 to 15 employees (not sure if I got the number right)

The following are all major concerns for every roofing contractor:

- weather
- falls

- roof hazards
- asbestos
- hot product handling
- fumes from product
- working at night
- finding good employees who will work in these conditions

The NRCA has 25 to 30 safety programs including electrical safety and fall safety

Many members say they don't take the time to train their employees.

NRCA is developing a safety certification program for member companies.

His company, The Gooding Group

He noted that money had been changing hands in the parking lot after work...drugs.

He instituted an EAP program where drug testing would be done and employees with a problem could get help. The program was announced a year in advance and they still lost 15% of the workforce when testing began.

We drug screen new applicants and over 40% fail the test.

Most employees who were using drugs quit rather than going on a program.

Before the testing workers compensation costs were greater than \$500,000/year. After the EAP/drug screening they went down to \$300,000.

They have a safety director who goes on every site.

All accidents are investigated.

Each employee takes an 8-hour safety program upon start of employment.

A back program is on line and tracks back problems.

Next year they will be starting a mandatory health risk evaluation program for every employee.

They produce a safety calendar featuring the art work of employee's children.

Eye, dental, health care are all paid for. This results in good retention, only a 2% turn over rate as compared to an industry rate of 20%.

Questions and Answers for all speakers:

What are the issues in investing in health programs? Flurry of responses:

- lower turn over and attracting good employees from other companies
- drug testing gave money back to do programs
- less than half of NFIB members supply health care for employees
- general health issues are personal matter not a business issue so most small businesses will not deal with general health issues (obesity, exercise, etc)

Can you purchase health insurance as an association group?

- Looked at it but have not gone that way.

NFIB invests in worker safety videos and other program material for creating your own business safety program. NFIB is currently looking at rates of use for these programs. It is believed that they are not widely used.

NFIB about every 2 years a small business will change insurance carriers so the insurance companies may not want to develop invest in long-term company safety programs.

Aging workers?

How does a drug free workplace fit into small business interests? What do you say to employers that fear putting this in place?

- Lots of work sites want to know that subs are going to be drug free. That is a business case.

- Comment: As larger employers do drug testing the small businesses may be getting the drug users. Drug use will lead to absenteeism and many other problems.

How do trade associations communicate safety and health issues to it's members?

- Roofing association does that for a drug program and many other safety issues
- NFIB news letters and web sites, seminars

What is the source of your safety and health information?

- Publications, government and international associations or associations in other countries.

What's the best way to communicate with small business?

- Web, fax, snail mail are all used. It depends on the company.

What about ethics?

- Each safety and health promotion program has ethical, medical, legal, incentive, and other issues outlined to guide the small business in role out and use of safety and health programs.

### → **Opportunities for an integrated approach**

- There are organizations like Business Partners for Prevention (BPP) and the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) that we should partner with.

- We need to continue to make a business case for prevention.

### → **Barriers to success**

- Small business is spread out with more than 70% of businesses being less than 10 employees
- Health care costs are rising, last year increasing 22%.
- There is an attitude of "accidents will happen" that must be overcome.

### → **Recommendations for overcoming identified barriers**

- Small business hires lots of family and friends and so is more interested in keeping them safe.
- Associations are in place and connected to small business.
- With higher health care costs we have the attention of small business.
- There are off-the-shelf programs out there that business can download and use.